

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6519

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 32345

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LA, US

SUBJ: LAO VISA PROBLEMS FOR AMERICAN JOURNALISTS

1. BANGKOK-BASED FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN MAKING CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO OBTAIN LAO VISAS IN ORDER TO COVER DECEMBER 2 CELEBRATIONS. AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE SUCCEEDED ARE BBC AND REUTERS. HOWEVER, EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS FROM RELIABLE AMERICAN JOURNALIST THAT LPDR SEEMS TO BE PLAYING DIFFERENT SORT OF BALL WITH AMERICANS.

2. NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT DAVID ANDELMAN REPORTED SEEING LIST AT LAO EMBASSY BANGKOK OF REPORTERS GRANTED PERMISSION TO VISIT VIENTIANE FOR THE EVENT. ALTHOUGH ANDELMAN'S OWN APPLICATION WAS REJECTED THE NAMES OF BOTH LEWIS SIMONS OF WASHINGTON POST AND DENIS GRAY OF AP APPEARED ON THE LIST. HOWEVER, BOTH OF THESE JOURNALISTS HAVE SINCE CALLED AT THAT EMBASSY, ONLY TO BE TOLD THAT IT HAS NO PERMISSION TO ISSUE THEM VISAS. ON THE OTHER HAND, LAO EMBASSY INFORMED CBS' PETER COLLINS THAT HIS APPLICATION WAS APPROVED. YET, ONCE HE WENT TO PICK UP VISA, HE WAS INFORMED THAT THERE WAS CHANGE IN POLICY AND CBS WOULD NOT BE ADMITTED. ALL THESE JOURNALISTS ARE TRYING TO RECTIFY SITUATION THROUGH THEIR OWN CONTACTS IN VIENTIANE, BUT NONE CAN PREDICT WHAT THEIR PROSPECTS ARE.

WHITEHOUSE

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